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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5690  
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE  
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LISBON 000710

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DEPT FOR DRL/MLGA:NOYES, IO/RHS:ROHN, AND AF/S:HILL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/10/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EUN](#) [XA](#) [PO](#)

SUBJECT: ON ZIMBABWE: PORTUGAL'S VIEWS ON EU, HRC, AND  
AFRICA UNION

REF: A. STATE 33357

[1](#)B. STATE 34009

Classified By: POL CHIEF TROY FITRELL, REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The EU is already discussing action to condemn Zimbabwe in the Human Rights Council, but that action may merely be an EU statement during deliberations. Portugal is actively engaged in negotiations with the African Union on a joint strategy in the lead up to a potential EU-AU summit during Portugal's EU presidency. The presence or absence of Zimbabwe's president at such a summit complicates all policy and logistical planning. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Deputy Director General for Foreign Policy Antonio Ricoca Freire told us March 19 that the Government of Portugal (GOP) agrees with U.S. positions regarding recent events in Zimbabwe (reftels) and that the European Union (EU) was discussing how to proceed in the Human Rights Council (HRC) and in other venues. He and Africa Department official Isabel Bela Ferreira also noted that Zimbabwe issues were on the agenda for the EU's Africa Group meeting on March 21.

[1](#)3. (C) Ricoca Freire told us that he was leaving directly from our meeting to fly to Brussels for meetings with EU counterparts on United Nations (UN) issues. Ricoca Freire noted that as those issues include the HRC, he expected to discuss Zimbabwe with those colleagues. He also noted that his German colleague would host a Troika meeting with U.S. officials, at which Ricoca Freire expected to discuss Zimbabwe on the margins.

The Human Rights Council

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[1](#)4. (C) Ricoca Freire noted that EU Heads of Mission (HOM) in Geneva met March 16 to establish a list of potential coordinated actions that member states could take in the HRC.

While discussions continue over which course of action the EU would take, Ricoca Freire said that the options under discussion were as follows:

-- The HRC passes a resolution condemning Zimbabwe: This course, Ricoca Freire opined, would either be a strong resolution bound to be rejected or a weak resolution that the government of Zimbabwe could spin to its own advantage.

-- A statement from the HRC Chair regarding Zimbabwe: As this course would require general consensus of the participants, Ricoca Freire suggested such a statement would be even weaker than any resolution.

-- An EU statement during the HRC sessions: Ricoca Freire said that the third week of the session would be dedicated to country-specific deliberations. He noted that the EU was

steadfast that the situation in Zimbabwe would be an agenda item and that a strong coordinated EU statement would be supported by individual statements from EU member states. He recognized, however, that any strong statement would be balanced by statements of support for Zimbabwe by those delegations sympathetic to President Mugabe.

15. (C) Ricoca Freire also noted that the HRC needed to take action on Sudan in regard to the Darfur situation. He suggested that conflict over Zimbabwe will make agreement on a Sudan resolution even more difficult to achieve.

16. (C) Ricoca Freire said that Portugal's Ambassador in Geneva had been authorized to negotiate and reach agreement with his EU counterparts regarding Zimbabwe and that a delegation from the Ministry was in Geneva this week to assist on the matter. He noted, however, that the GOP's desire to have strong action within the HRC was tempered by its desire to develop the HRC as an institution. A rejected resolution, he cautioned, would damage the HRC more than no action at all.

17. (C) Ricoca Freire suggested that the very states with which the EU and the U.S. would be doing battle over Zimbabwe were those with which one needed to collaborate in order to develop the institution. Work on that reform, he noted, needed to be done before the end of June. Fellow EU member Romania would take over the chairmanship in July and the GOP did not want an EU state to inherit a dysfunctional system. He recognized that an HRC that could not act on such a clear case as Zimbabwe was of little value, but maintained that they needed to create "the best HRC possible."

The African Union  
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18. (C) Bela Ferreira noted that Ghanaian President John Kufuor would visit Portugal March 20. Although the meeting is ostensibly a bilateral visit at the invitation of Portugal's President Cavaco Silva, Kufuor would also act in his capacity as the current African Union (AU) Chairman and Portuguese officials would act as representatives of the incoming EU presidency.

19. (C) Kufuor has a meeting scheduled with Minister for Foreign Relations Amado to discuss the EU-AU Joint Strategy and the substantive issues that would be addressed at a potential EU-AU Summit during the Portuguese EU presidency. Ricoca Freire noted that Zimbabwe's participation in such a summit was not on the agenda for any of Kufuor's meetings, but that the current situation in Zimbabwe may arise as a point of discussion. Bela Ferreira said that the Kufuor meetings would preview the next set of Joint Strategy discussions scheduled for next month in Addis Ababa.

110. (C) Ricoca Freire suggested that ongoing discussions of summit substance must be kept separate from discussions of attendance. That said, Ricoca Freire recognized that Mugabe's presence may damage any possibility of substantive achievement at a summit and Mugabe's control of the media ensured that he could spin the summit's activities any way he liked to the people of Zimbabwe.

Comment  
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111. (C) The GOP's agreement with our views of the recent events in Zimbabwe stands starkly in contrast with expected efforts to do anything about it. Ricoca Freire refused to offer predictions of what the EU representatives in Geneva might decide to do, but he was clearly preparing for an EU statement instead of any official HRC action.

112. (C) The potential EU-AU summit will be a great challenge, both on a policy front and logistically. The struggle to hammer out a substantive agenda for a summit is necessary to

make the meeting palatable to skeptical EU members and so that the summit can be Portugal's crowning achievement during its presidency. Each passing day discussing the agenda, however, only defers the difficult decision regarding Mugabe's presence and only increases the difficulty of hosting 60 to 70 heads of state on ever-shorter notice.  
Hoffman